

TIME TO TALK. ASK your patients about their use of complementary and alternative medicine.

Ask

Did you know that more than one in three adults use some form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)? For women and older Americans, those numbers are even higher—two out of five report using CAM. Yet many don't discuss usage with their health care providers. Start talking today.

What is complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)?

CAM is a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine. CAM includes such products and practices as herbal supplements, meditation, chiropractic manipulation, and acupuncture.

Why should I ask my patients about their CAM use?

- Most patients do not proactively disclose use of CAM to their health care providers.
- Patients with chronic and acute medical conditions turn to CAM in large numbers—most frequently to treat pain (including back, neck, or joint pain; arthritis; or other musculoskeletal conditions), as well as anxiety, cholesterol, head or chest colds, and other medical conditions.¹
- People use CAM to promote health and wellness.
- As more patients use CAM therapies, you need a full picture of all conventional and CAM practices they are using to effectively manage their care.

How can I find the time to discuss CAM with my patients?

- Include a question about CAM use on medical history forms.
- Ask your patients to bring a list of all the therapies they use, including prescription, over-the-counter, herbal supplements, and other CAM practices.
- Actively distribute *Time to Talk* materials to patients.

With so little information available about most CAM therapies, what can I tell my patients?

- You can refer your patients to credible, Federal resources to get evidence-based information and patient education materials. You do not need to know everything about all CAM treatments.
- Rigorous scientific research on CAM is taking place at major academic and medical institutions throughout the United States.

Federal Resources for Providers

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health
nccam.nih.gov
nccam.nih.gov/health/providers

CAM on PubMed®
Journal citations specific to CAM:
nccam.nih.gov/research/camonpubmed

Online Continuing Education Series
Video lectures available for CME/CEU credits:
nccam.nih.gov/training/videolectures

Resources for Patients

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
nccam.nih.gov
Toll-free clearinghouse: 1-888-644-6226

MedlinePlus
medlineplus.gov

¹ Barnes PM, Bloom B, Nahin R. Complementary and alternative medicine use among adults and children: United States, 2007. *CDC National Health Statistics Report #12*. 2008.

